



Music Makes the Difference For Competition – Practice OR Teaching West Coast Swing

Skippy Blair © 10-06 Rev. 11-11 (Good in 2006 and good today)

Frequently, I hear DJs, as well as other interested people describe how they select music that really “SWINGS.” When someone tells you HOW they select music that swings, you know that they have already become aware that there is a LOT of music that simply does NOT swing. The problem with poor music selection usually lies with people whose limited background allows them to assume that ALL music is swing music. They confuse the fact that although it is POSSIBLE to dance Swing to almost anything - with the fact that doing so - is NOT an asset that will assist the development of anyone’s *West Coast Swing* skills. Music really DOES make a difference.

There is a recognizable sound in swing music that makes you “feel” the groove in the music. Some music almost DEMANDS that you get up and DANCE! AND - It makes you want to dance SWING - and if you can’t get up and dance - you will simply tap your foot. Whatever is happening - requires you to do SOMETHING when music plays, that swings. It really is an unmistakable FEELING. On top of that, dancing to music that “swings” will definitely “tune you in” to experiencing the “thrill” of real West Coast Swing. Chills actually run up your spine. That’s an experience worth working toward to. It should be noted that it is also very easy to DILUTE your skills if you consistently dance to music that lacks that “ability to SWING.”

I have an exercise that I use as an experiment: I have people sit and listen to a piece of music - then my instructions are: “tighten your abdominal muscles - Make a figure 8 with your *Center Point of Balance* (CPB - or Core) - in time to the music.” Actually, that is much easier to demonstrate in person, than it is to describe in words.

Another suggestion is to silently count the music, using “Rolling Count” - “&a1 &a2 - &a3 &a4” - etc. Even if you cannot distinguish that sound in the music, music that “swings” *allows* that sound to integrate into the rhythm section. It’s like having another drummer “sit in” - a drummer who fits perfectly with the rest of the band. The dancer becomes the added, and *most important, rhythm instrument in the band*. The dancer is the visual aspect of music. Let’s face it: Today, most of our dance music is recorded. The DANCER is the LIVE part of the music. I love dancing to ALL kinds of music - but I want to dance West Coast Swing - to music that *really SWINGS*.